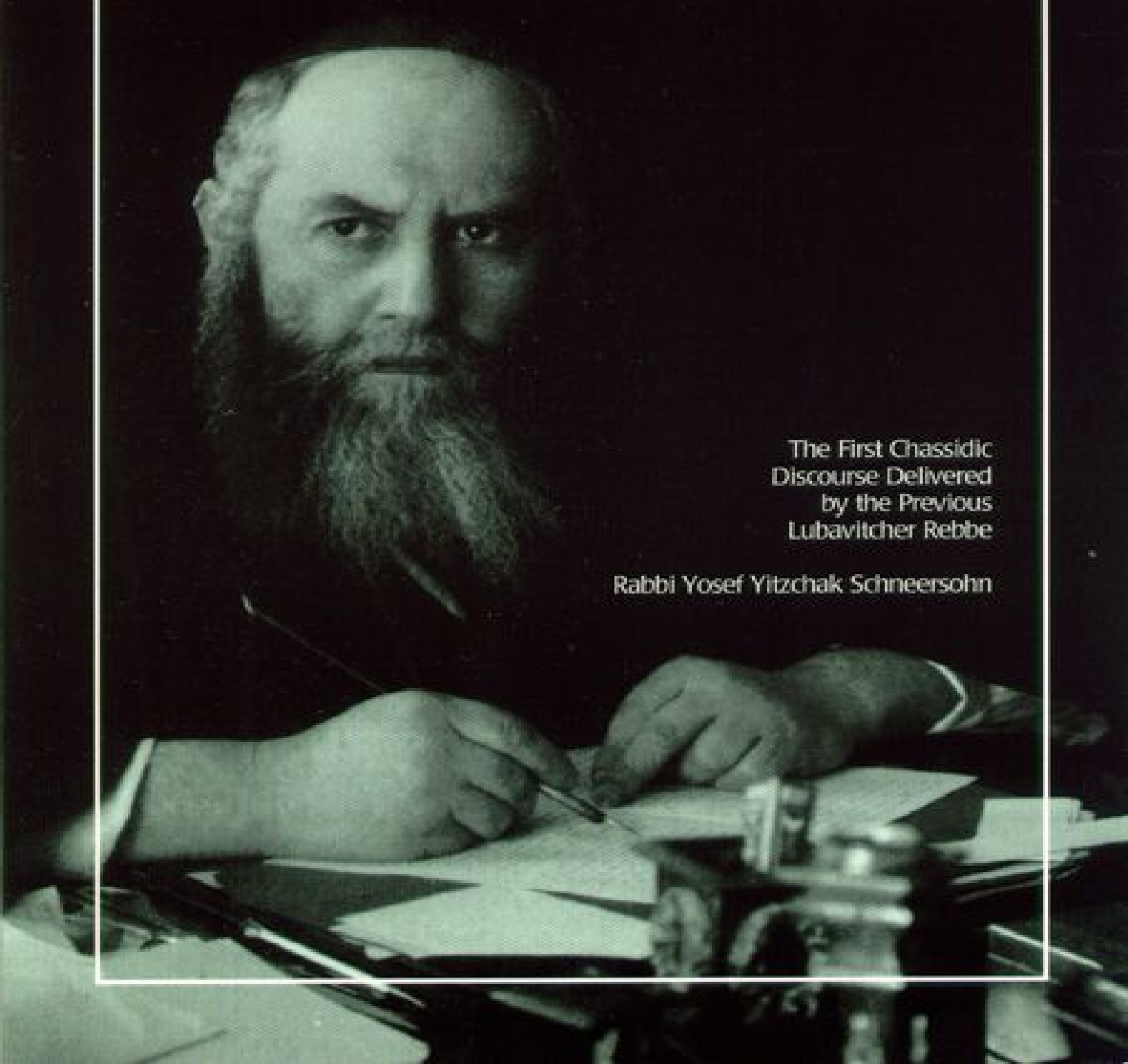


AN END TO EVIL

Reishis Goyim Amalek

The First Chassidic
Discourse Delivered
by the Previous
Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn



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Translated by
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Sichos In English

An End to Evil Reishis Goyim Amalek

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Publisher's Foreword

In honor of the approach of *Beis Nissan*, we are happy to share with our readers a freshly-edited English translation of *Reishis Goyim Amalek 5680 [1920]*.

This *maamar* is of particular interest because it was the first discourse delivered by the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, of blessed memory, after succeeding to the mantle of leadership on *Beis Nissan*, 5780 (1920). It is based on the last discourse delivered by his father, the Rebbe Rashab, who passed away on that date.

The original translation of this *maamar* was first published in 5747 [1987] in response to a call of the Rebbe that it be widely studied in order to ameliorate certain untoward events that clouded the chassidic horizon at that time. And since (in the words of the Rebbe Rayatz) “the words of *tzaddikim* are eternally true,” we may safely assume that its widespread study today will likewise help to sweeten whatever situations require sweetening today.

To Farbreng with the Rebbe Rashab in Rostov

This *maamar* was first heard in the midst of the bitter civil war that shook the cities of Russia in the aftermath of the 1917 Revolution and the First World War. The dangers were so fierce that the Rebbe Rashab had planned to leave Rostov with his family before the approaching Bolsheviks overran it. This plan never eventuated, and in view of the grim situation he even forbade his chassidim to visit him to quench their thirst for *Chassidus* or to be received for private audience at *yechidus*.

The chassidim, however, continued to long for their well-loved and well-remembered visits to the home of the Rebbe Rashab. Despite his emergency orders, therefore, a large group of chassidim arrived there on Purim in order to participate in an uplifting *farbrengen*. Thus it was that the whole spiritual drama described below took place — in the very same building in Rostov that was redeemed from its gentile occupants this year after its seventy years in exile. This house was the home of the Rebbe Rashab from 1915 to 1920, and of the Rebbe Rayatz from 1915 until he was forced to flee from Rostov in 1924. To this day it resounds with many rich and epic moments in Lubavitch history, and it is scheduled to soon house a vigorous new branch of the same Tomchei Temimim Yeshivah which flourished in Rostov until 1924.

The *farbrengen* to be held with the visiting chassidim was originally intended to be brief. They were to disperse promptly because of the law which unequivocally prohibited all gatherings. Half an hour after it began, however, the Rebbe Rashab said *LeChaim!* to all those present. From that moment, as one of those present records,² “we saw a transformation overtake him, as if there was now a new spirit within him.... He called to one of the chassidim and asked him to bring *mashke*.”

His wife, the *Rebbitzin* Sterna Sarah, and his son, who was later to succeed him as the Rebbe Rayatz, were fearful for his life.

The Rebbe Rashab was reassuring: “Yosef Yitzchak, don’t be afraid. We shall remain intact. And I don’t mean intact in secret chambers; I mean intact as we overtly move outward and extend ourselves.” [In the Yiddish original, *mir veln zain gantz mit unzer gantzer yetziah vehispasshtus*.]

The chassid who recorded these words added his own note to his readers: “You can understand for yourselves what these words were hinting at.” [I.e., an assumed allusion to the Rebbe Rashab’s own impending passing.]

A Maamar to Silence Bolsheviks

While the chassidim were seated there around the Rebbe Rashab’s table, news arrived that Bolsheviks with search-warrants were systematically ransacking their homes. Fear froze their hearts, but the Rebbe Rashab continued as before to rouse them on as they sang. As the same chassid

continues: “His conduct appeared wondrously different to anything we had previously seen; we saw overt miracles from him that night.”

Sure enough, while the Rebbe Rashab was in the midst of *farbrengen*, the search squad knocked at the door. They were told that a search was now out of the question because the Rebbe was now occupied. Their second visit struck terror upon the chassidim, some of whom by this stage were not completely sober. To make things worse, as one would have thought, a mound of incriminating evidence was piled high on the table — the money that these poor chassidim had all contributed and collected for the upkeep of the Tomchei Temimim Yeshivah.

This was the history-making Yeshivah which the Rebbe Rashab himself had founded in Lubavitch in 1897. When he had fled with his family from Lubavitch in White Russia with the approach of the German forces at the height of World War I, it had followed him southeast here, to Rostov on the River Don. Tomchei Temimim was the crucible in which true chassidim were forged. It encapsulated the future of the Chabad-Lubavitch tradition. It was thus the apple of his eye — and the main target of the Yevseksia.

The Bolsheviki were now inside the room. The money was on the table, and the time had come for the Rebbe Rashab to deliver a *maamar*.

The eye-witness continues his report: “Before he began he directed that nothing should be removed from the table, and then added: ‘As I stand in the present situation, I have no fear of them whatever.’

“They now took up positions facing him at the table. He turned aside a little and said: ‘*Nu*, let’s start speaking words of *Chassidus*, and then they will be altogether nullified.’

“With that he immediately embarked on the *maamar* with these words: *Reishis goyim Amalek, veachariso adei oved* — ‘Amalek is the first among nations, and in the end he shall be destroyed.’ Its theme is that the *kelipos* do not have any true and intrinsic existence; they are non-entities.

“After standing and looking at him for a long time, the Bolsheviki left without a word. We stayed there till about four a.m.”

The First Maamar of the Rebbe Rayatz

Two weeks later, on *Motzaei Shabbos*, the eve of the second of Nissan, the Rebbe Rashab departed this world physically.

In the dynasties of most other chassidic trends, the succession is customarily overt and immediate. In the case of most of our Rebbeim, and so too in this case, the mantle of leadership was accepted in gradual stages and only after some time worn overtly. (In fact, the Rebbe has referred in writing to *Beis Nissan* as the day on which the Rebbe Rayatz assumed the responsibilities of Rebbe.)

In Lubavitch tradition, the delivery of a *maamar* by the new incumbent is commonly perceived as indicating the acceptance of the *Nesius*. Thus, in more recent years, chassidim who were privileged to be present at “770” on the first *yahrzeit* of the Rebbe Rayatz on *Yud Shvat*, 5711 [1951], testify that the air was electrified with anticipation: Was the Rebbe going to deliver what was to prove to be the first *maamar* of one-and-a-half thousand?

Keeping this tradition in mind, the following first-person description of the prelude to the first *maamar* of the Rebbe Rayatz — i.e., the *maamar* which appears hereunder — is of acute interest. The description is borrowed from *Ashkavta DeRebbe*,³ an account of the period of the Rebbe Rashab’s passing written by one of his close disciples, the eminent Rabbi Moshe DovBer Rivkin, later *rosh yeshivah* of Yeshivas Torah VaDaas in New York.

“It was after *Minchah* on *Shabbos Kodesh [Parshas] Tzav*, the last day of the *shivah*. The chassidim were all waiting for *Maariv* in the dining room adjoining the study of the Rebbe [Rashab], whose soul is in Eden, and the Rebbe [Rayatz] *Shlita* was in the study alone. One of his attendants called for me, and as soon as I entered he said with a broken heart: ‘My father, after all, ordered me to speak words of *Chassidus* [i.e., to deliver *maamarim*] to *Anash*. But who am I, and how can I bring myself to stand in front of the members of the chassidic fraternity and deliver *maamarim*?’

“In his humility he wanted to continue, but I interrupted him by saying that I would rather not hear further words in this vein.

“He continued: ‘Nevertheless, since my father gave me an order, I would like to deliver a *maamar* of *Chassidus* for you. In that way I will have discharged my obligation to fulfill my father’s holy instruction.’

“I of course agreed. He did not want to be seated; instead, we walked about in the study, and he recited for me the last *maamar* which the Rebbe [Rashab] of blessed memory delivered publicly — the above-mentioned *maamar* that begins, *Reishis Goyim Amalek*. The wording was identical to that of the original *maamar*, except that he interspersed many glosses of his own. When it came to an end and I was about to leave, he detained me for a moment and asked me not to reveal to anyone what had transpired.

“ ‘Why not?’ I asked. ‘In fact, I would very much like to let people know,’ and so on.

“He earnestly repeated his request and I remained silent. When I left the study, however, I shared my information ‘as a secret’ only with the elderly chassid, Rabbi Shmuel Gourary. Since he had not been ordered to keep it a secret, he promptly passed it on. Within a few minutes, by word of mouth, the news had spread throughout the whole of the chassidic brotherhood, to whom it served as a measure of consolation.”

A Tzaddik’s Merest Vessels Retain their Sanctity

Rabbi Rivkin further relates that the Rebbe Rayatz lent him a transcript (a *ksav*) of the *maamar* for a few days, but he was afraid to copy it without explicit permission from the Rebbe. At any rate, he did take the liberty of copying the following few lines (from sec. 4 below). The first sentence of this passage is repeated verbatim from the parent *maamar* of the Rebbe Rashab, and its continuation is part of a long parenthetical addition by the Rebbe Rayatz: “Anything which G-d ordained to serve as a proper receptor for the irradiation of His light enjoys an essential and absolute existence. (One might add that this is the meaning of teachings such as,⁴ ‘Holiness cannot be displaced,’ and⁵ ‘Ritual objects retain their sanctity.’ Thus, the place in which a *tzaddik* studied Torah and engaged in the service of G-d retains its sanctity even after he has risen out of corporeal life and begun true life, for the luminescence of his Divine service remains there. We may therefore say that the place in which he studied and engaged in Torah, and all the vessels he utilized in the course of his spiritual service, retain their sanctity as part of his personal share in the spiritual rectification and elevation of the world...).”

In this passage, the Rebbe once observed,⁶ we see “something truly wondrous” — that a *tzaddik*’s holiness fully retains its ongoing power not only with regard to his manuscripts and learned books and the like, but even with regard to his everyday objects, such as his table and chair. Moreover, the Rebbe points out, the context makes it clear that the Rebbe Rayatz is likening this relationship to the relationship between the “vessels” and the “lights” of the realm of *Atzilus*.

Furthermore, the Rebbe continues, this ongoing holiness continues powerfully *while the table remains an ordinary everyday table*. So powerfully, indeed, does it continue, that (as the passage interpolated by the Rebbe Rayatz goes on to describe) “once, in about the year 5645 or 5646 [1885-6], I saw my revered father [the Rebbe Rashab] enter the study of his father — my grandfather [the Rebbe Maharash]..., where he stood against the *table*, opposite his father’s *chair*.”

“In other words,” the Rebbe concludes, “he entered that room exactly as he had been accustomed to entering it for *yechidus*. And the term *yechidus* signifies that the *yechidah* (the soul’s innermost core) of the individual coming for *yechidus* fuses with the *yechidah* of the individual to whom he comes for *yechidus*....”

An Unusual Publishing History

In 5743 [1983] the Editorial Board of Otzar HaChassidim, the Lubavitch publishing arm which is responsible for *maamarim*, asked the Rebbe whether they should publish the *maamar* of the Rebbe Rayatz in honor of *Beis Nissan*. The Rebbe directed that it should appear in advance of that date, together with sources and the glosses that he had appended when it appeared in *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5680. The Rebbe’s reply mentioned that “this is evidently the closing *maamar* [of the Rebbe Rashab].”

When the proof pages were submitted to the Rebbe for his approval he indicated the above-mentioned additions of the Rebbe Rayatz by enclosing them in parentheses, and it was assumed at this stage that this was how the *maamar* was to appear in print.

A number of interesting points emerge from the Rebbe’s rewrite of the draft proposed for the Publisher’s Preface.

Firstly: Though the Rebbe himself had described *Reishis Goyim Amalek* as being “evidently the closing *maamar* [of the Rebbe Rashab],” he did not consider it right that this preface should describe it — *without further qualification* — as “the closing *maamar*,” because there is one more *maamar*, the one beginning *Hineh Anochi*, which the Rebbe Rashab delivered *after* this one.

The solution to this seeming anomaly is to be found in Rabbi Rivkin’s account of the unique circumstances in which the *maamar* beginning *Hineh Anochi* was delivered: “On *Shabbos Kodesh Parshas [Ki] Sisa*, a *maamar* was delivered [by the Rebbe Rashab] on the words, *Hineh Anochi Kores Bris....* The only ones present were his son [the Rebbe Rayatz] and three others, including myself, the writer of these lines. Hence, *Reishis Goyim Amalek* is the last *maamar* that the Rebbe Rashab delivered *publicly*. It is also the first *maamar* that the Rebbe Rayatz delivered when he first became Rebbe.”

Accordingly, the Rebbe’s point is evidently that though *Reishis Goyim Amalek* is not literally the last *maamar* of the Rebbe Rashab, nevertheless, since it was the last one delivered publicly, and its theme was taken up by his son immediately on his succession, one may still apply to it the quotation from *Midrash Tehillim*, “At the place that this one ceased, this one began.”

Secondly: Commenting on the interpolations, the Rebbe commented on the draft for the Publisher’s Preface that “there are many profound things to be learned by comparing the way a particular concept is explained in the original *maamar* with the way it is explained by the additions in the second *maamar*.”

The Rebbe goes on to say that “this may frequently be seen in the two manners in which material is added in the *maamarim* of the *Tzemach Tzedek*: (a) the interpolations are indicated by parentheses, sometimes introduced by [an initial letter or whatever] to show that what follows is an appended gloss; (b) the interpolations are incorporated in the body of the text, sometimes entailing changes in it, so that together they become one *maamar* — as in this case.”

This final phrase made it clear that the Rebbe had not intended that his earlier indication of the interpolations should appear in the printed version;

rather, they and the original text together were to constitute one *maamar*.

Echoes of the Maamar in 1970 and 1987

In Adar, 5730 [1970], exactly fifty years after the time of the Rebbe Rashab's last *maamar*, the Rebbe delivered a series of three *maamarim* which were based on three parallel discourses of the Rebbe Rashab — the above-mentioned *Reishis Goyim Amalek* and two other related ones. In the Publisher's Preface the Rebbe noted the fifty-year anniversary, and described the new *maamarim* as being "parts [of the earlier *maamarim*], with alterations and additions."

Keeping in mind that *Reishis Goyim Amalek* was explicitly intended to nullify the Amalek of that era, viz., the Bolsheviks, it may perhaps be assumed that the delivery of these parallel *maamarim* in Adar 5730 [1970] was likewise intended to nullify the painful decree which at exactly this time the Rebbe began to publicly campaign against — the issue which is popularly known as "Who is a Jew?"

Some years later, on the eve of Rosh Chodesh Nissan, 5747 [1987],⁷ the Rebbe urged that *Reishis Goyim Amalek* be widely studied. At the same time he made what appears to have been an allusion to the insistent appeal which was being heard in the Federal Court at exactly that time contesting the ownership of the historic library of the Rebbe Rayatz. (Ultimately, the court decided that it was not to be inherited by any private family member; it was the lawful property of Agudas Chassidei Chabad, with the Rebbe at its head *ex officio*).

An End to Darkness

To conclude with the thought with which the Rebbe closes one of the *maamarim* of 5730 [1970]:⁸ Battling against the *kelipah* of Amalek by means of the Divine spark within one's soul and by means of one's conscious faculties brings about⁹ "G-d's battle against Amalek from generation to generation," a phrase which the *Targum* relates to the generation of *Mashiach*. It brings about the time at which¹⁰ "[G-d] has set a limit to darkness" — with the imminent coming of *Mashiach*.

In the meantime, as we said above, the original translation of this *maamar* was first published in 5747 [1987] in response to a call of the Rebbe that it be widely studied in order to ameliorate certain untoward events that clouded the chassidic horizon at that time. And since (in the words of the Rebbe Rayatz) “the words of *tzaddikim* are eternally true,” we may safely assume that its widespread study today will likewise help to sweeten whatever situations require sweetening today. This will surely bring us closer to the days in which there will be [11](#) “neither envy nor competition” — the days in which “the occupation of the whole world will be solely to know G-d.”

Sichos In English

Beis Nissan, 5758 [1998]

Yahrzeit-hillula of the Rebbe Rashab *n”e*

Credits

This work was translated by Rabbi Sholom B. Wineberg, edited by Uri Kaploun, and designed and laid out by Yosef Yitzchok Turner. The cover is the work of 20/20 Digital Design Group. The publishing process was initiated and coordinated by the Director of Sichos In English, Rabbi Yonah Avtzon.

1.

It is written,¹² *Reishis goyim Amalek, veachriso adei oveid* — “Amalek is the first among nations, and in the end he shall be destroyed.” The opening phrase means that Amalek is the source and root of the Seven [evil] Nations [the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, and so on] — yet he is separate from them.

Concerning the domain of holiness, too, it is written,¹³ *ani Rishon veani acharon* — “I am first and I am last....” In this verse, “I am first” refers to the aspect of G-dliness which encompasses and transcends all worlds, and which is known as *sovev kol almin*; “I am last” refers to the aspect of G-dliness which is immanent in all worlds, and which is known as *memaleh kol almin*. Though *sovev kol almin* is distinct from *memaleh kol almin*, it is its source and root.

The same is also true (though keeping in mind the distinction between holiness and its opposite) with regard to the forces of unholiness which are collectively termed *kelipah*. Amalek, personifying the toughest *kelipah*, is the spiritual source and root of all those nations, yet he is distinct from them.

The conclusion of the above verse (“and in the end he shall be destroyed”) seems to imply that the *kelipah* of Amalek contains no element that can be salvaged by means of the divine service called *beirurim* (i.e., the sifting and refining of materiality by elevating the Divine sparks embedded within it). The *kelipah* of Amalek, so it would appear, cannot be rehabilitated into something positive and thereby be brought to a state of rectification (*tikkun*). Rather, the only “rectification” of Amalek is its utter eradication and destruction. This is hinted at in the verse, “and in the end he shall be destroyed” — Amalek’s consummation is its destruction.

However, we find [written in the words of our Sages] that¹⁴ “Some of the descendants of Haman [who in turn was a descendant of Amalek, converted to Judaism and] studied the Torah in public.”

Now, the study of Torah [even when pursued individually] is part of the *avodah* of *beirurim*. Public Torah study [is superior, in that it] recalls the verse,¹⁵ *chachmos bachutz taronah* — “The wisdom [of Torah] exults [even] outside...” I.e., even those external aspects of the universe which are prone to become (heaven forfend) sundered [from G-dliness] can exult, for they too can be elevated by means of the *beirurim* wrought by Torah study.

Since Haman descended from Amalek¹⁶ [and Haman’s descendants, far from being destroyed, even studied Torah in public], it follows that even the *kelipah* of Amalek may be rectified and elevated. How can one reconcile these two statements — that the total destruction of Amalek is deemed necessary [for he is considered to be beyond salvage and rectification], yet he can indeed be rectified and elevated [as in the case of his descendants]?

A solution may be found in the verse,¹⁷ *keitz sam lachoshech* — “[G-d] has set a limit to darkness...” I.e., He has limited the time during which the darkness of *kelipah* will be permitted to derive nurture and sustenance from the leavings of holiness, from the most extrinsic level of holiness. When that time expires the *kelipah* will be utterly destroyed and annihilated, leaving no vestige of itself, because it does not possess any intrinsic form of true existence; it is a non-entity.

[Pious Deceit]

[This is so] even though the forces of unholiness are extremely tenacious. Knowing what transpires deep in his own soul, every man can attest to how intensely his evil inclination and animal soul afflict and oppress him. Never pausing nor ceasing, they confront him with a test at every turn and confuse him with unwholesome thoughts.

Moreover, they incite him to err and stray from one thing to another by means of chicanery and deceit. At times they convince him that because of his supposedly high degree of piety and spirituality it is beneath his dignity to [exercise vigilance in order to] perform a particular *mitzvah* in the most scrupulous and beautiful manner possible; rather, they argue, he should [utilize this time to] engage in Torah study or the performance of [some other] precept. [Obviously,] the purpose [of inflating him with spiritual pretensions] is to harm him and deflect him from acting as he should.

At other times the *kelipah* [falsely] derides his spiritual efforts. “Such a [lofty] manner of spiritual service,” it argues, “is totally out of character; who are you to seek such exalted and rarefied forms of divine service?” The *kelipah*, of all things, becomes a “defender of truth,” demanding that everything be done with uncompromising sincerity — with the intent that the individual will simply refrain from doing whatever he ought to do.

All the above arguments illustrate the tenacity of the *kelipah*. It is particularly active when it comes to confusing the individual through dreams, which result from one’s daytime thoughts.¹⁸ Here the animal soul marshalls all the power at its command to disturb and trouble him.

So, too, with regard to other mundane matters which are bodily necessities, such as food and drink, the animal soul deploys all its guile to convince the individual that the Torah obliges him to indulge [rather than simply to care for the proper maintenance of his health]. Moreover, the *kelipah* gives rise to the thought that it does not really matter how well he performs G-d’s commands, so long as he goes through the required motions. All the above serves to demonstrate the great strength of the *kelipah*. [How, then, can we say that it is really a non-entity?]

As is known, the *sitra achra* [lit., “the Other Side,” a euphemism for the world’s unholy counterpart to holiness] derives its spiritual nurture from the “encompassing” [i.e., transcendent] level of Divinely-diffused life-force known as the *makkif*. Hence its strength, even though in essence it enjoys no intrinsic reality; it is a non-entity.

To clarify: As is known, in the realm of holiness there are ten *Sefiros* — “ten and not nine, [ten] and not eleven” — whereas in the realm of *kelipah* there are “eleven crowns.”¹⁹

There are ten *Sefiros* in the realm of holiness because in this realm each emanation of Divine illumination unites with its corresponding “vessel” [which is the attribute wherein it resides] and is not separate from it. [There are exactly ten “vessels” — the three intellectual attributes of *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daas*, and the seven emotive attributes from *Chessed* through *Malchus*; hence the illuminations that unite with the “vessels” are likewise limited to ten.]

[Luminary and Light]

Moreover, because in the realm of holiness the Divine illumination unites with the vessels, they too possess essential and absolute existence. [This is so] even though the light itself does not exist essentially and absolutely. Only He whose existence derives from His very own being and essence and is not dependent on any other factor can be said to possess true, essential and absolute existence, whereas light does not derive from its own self, rather it derives from the Luminary.

(This, by the way, explains why this illumination is termed “light without end” (*Or Ein Sof*) rather than “light without beginning” — for indeed it does have a beginning, namely, the Luminary Who can freely choose to illuminate or not to illuminate. As *Rambam* states,²⁰ “This is what the Prophet says: *veHavayah Elokim emes* — ‘And the L-rd G-d is true,’ meaning that He alone is the truth; nothing else is true as He is.” For absolute truth is that which exists independently of everyone and everything else — a condition which can be ascribed solely to G-d Himself, Whose existence derives from His very own essence and being. In contrast, all that which issues from Him exists only by His volition and sufferance, and not independently.)

The same is true with regard to light: it exists only because the Luminary desires it to exist. If, then, even the light does not possess essential and absolute existence, how is it possible for the vessels — which merely unite with it — to possess essential and absolute existence?

The explanation is as follows: One of the main characteristics of light is that it cleaves to the Luminary, Whom it therefore resembles. Hence, when the Luminary desires that the light should possess essential and absolute existence, it attains such a state. When the light later unites with the vessels and the vessels nullify themselves to it, they too — through the intermediacy of the light — will attain essential and absolute existence.

This is also implied in the phrase,²¹ *hu kayam ushemo kayam, vechiso nachon* — “He endures and His Name endures; His throne is firmly established....” The term “He” refers to the essence (*Atzmus*) of the *Ein Sof*-light, Whose existence derives from His very own essence and being and Whose independent existence is eternal. Since the Luminary desires the existence of the light (which corresponds to His Name), His Name therefore also endures eternal and absolute existence.

(In fact, within *Or Ein Sof* itself there are two levels — “He” and “His Name,” which allude respectively to the “essence of the light” and the “diffusion of the light.” The term “He” [as implied by the use of the third-person pronoun] is that which is concealed, hence, the “essence of the light”; the term “His Name,” which bespeaks revelation, refers to the “diffusion of the light,” for diffused light also has essential and absolute existence.)

It is G-d’s Will that the light unite with the vessels. The vessels of *Tikkun* [i.e., the vessels and attributes of the World of *Atzilus*] are nullified to the Divine radiance [that shines within them]. Thus they, too, attain a state of essential and absolute existence.

(Nevertheless, with regard to the vessels the phrase used is, “His throne is *firmly established*” [indicating a lesser degree of permanence and independence than that of “endures”]; i.e., the vessels are not on the same level and of the same degree of “endurance” as are “He” and “His Name.” This is because “He” and “His Name” possess these qualities intrinsically, while the vessels are inherently merely vessels, and not at the level of illumination and light.

The term used is therefore *nachon*, which implies being fit, ready and established. When the vessels are in that state, i.e., when they are nullified to the light and long for it — for the Hebrew word *keli* (“vessel”) shares a root with *kilayon* (“yearning to the point of expiry”) — they are united with the light. At that time, the unity within the light [i.e., the union of the light with its source, the Luminary] is also found within the *kelim*, and they, too, attain an essential and absolute existence.

[The Soul’s Yearning is Immutable]

There is a source [in the literature of *Chassidus*] that explains that “His throne is established” alludes to Jewish souls, for they are fit receptors into which the Divine illumination can be drawn. Hence they possess essential and absolute existence, in the sense that they are not subject (G-d forbid) to elimination or change.

This is demonstrably observed. Every individual feels this to be so within his own soul: he is aware of the extent of his distance from G-dliness as a whole, and particularly aware of his dismal spiritual state with regard to

the proper performance of this *mitzvah* or that. Especially so, regarding the inward aspects of his divine service — in arousing the emotions of love and fear of G-d in his heart, and in his endeavors at engaging his mind in the contemplation of G-dliness. Similarly he realizes that his soul is arid in other spiritual areas: G-dly concepts fail to take a grip on his life.

Nevertheless, in spite of all the above, from time to time he is bestirred with an urgent yearning for G-dliness; he desires to fulfill all his duties and thirsts for any and all G-dly illumination. True, his soul's intrinsic state is such that he is always yearning — except that the world and his mundane concerns engage him so much that he finds himself bewildered (may Heaven protect us).

We palpably observe that during those times at which he tears himself away from the mundane concerns that afflict and press upon him, he will experience actual physical delight upon apprehending a G-dly perception, to the same degree that he delights in his own personal affairs.

All these [holy] sensations result from the essential aspect of the soul, which intrinsically possesses absolute existence. Thus, notwithstanding all the concealments and obstructions brought about by the world and his worldly affairs as a whole, and by his body and animal soul in particular, the individual is always able to rouse himself — to shake off the grit and grime that conceal and obscure [the G-dliness within].

Nevertheless, this state is referred to by [no more than] the phrase, “His throne is established,” for achieving it requires spiritual effort; the possibility remains that things may (G-d forbid) be otherwise. At the same time, the soul itself [in its essential state, as it stands apart from the body and animal soul,] enjoys genuine and absolute existence.

In contrast, the *kelipos* and *sitra achra* derive all their spiritual nurture from the “encompassing” [i.e., transcendent] level of Divine life-force known as the *makkif*, which does not garb itself within them and surely does not unite with them. This explains why in the realm of *kelipah* there are “eleven crowns” — ten forces of *kelipah* apart from the light of holiness which [nurtures them from afar but] does not unite with them. They thus have no real or lasting existence in their own right; they are merely sustained [from afar] by the “encompassing level” of Divine life-force. This

is their allotted portion until the End of Days, when their ultimate end will come about and they will be nullified, no trace of them remaining.

2.

To explain in general terms: [The downward flow of Divine illumination is apportioned in either of two ways, which are called] a “measuring-line” (*kav hamiddah*) and a “measuring-rod” (*kneh hamiddah*).²² The “measuring-line” gauges and limits [this Divine illumination], thereby making possible the existence of the Ten *Sefiros*, which consist of “lights” that shine within their respective “vessels”. The “measuring-line” gauges exactly what degree of illumination [or “current”] will match the receptive capacity [or “filament”] of the particular *Sefirah* into which it will flow, [for the loftier the *Sefirah*, the greater its absorptive capacity].

The “measuring-line” also delimits the extent to which the *Sefiros* are drawn forth and expand, just so far and no further. Were it not for this limitation and gauging it would be impossible for the Ten *Sefiros* to come into being.

This is analogous to the soul-faculties of a person here below: When his will and desire are revealed [i.e., dominant] it is impossible for his intellect to be revealed [i.e., dominant].

With regard to character traits in general, we observe that a person who is capricious by nature will be lacking in intellect, inasmuch as his entire being is wrapped up in his desires. Constantly longing for the objects of his desires, he will not have sated a previous desire yet will already be desiring something else. And so he proceeds from one desire to the next, never finding calm by their fulfillment.

Having one’s desires satisfied causes pleasure and calms a man’s spirit. However, this type of individual does not at all seek the resultant pleasure; rather, the longing itself is what is most important to him. We therefore find that such an individual constantly changes the objects of his desires.

[For most people] desire is an outgrowth of pleasure; i.e., they desire pleasurable things that accord with their particular nature. Those who are intellectually inclined derive pleasure from grasping concepts; those who are more emotional by nature derive pleasure from doing someone a good

turn or conducting themselves in a goodly fashion. The various levels and kinds [of pleasure depend on the particular composition] of one's wisdom, knowledge and understanding [if one is intellectually inclined, or on the balance of one's] attributes of kindness and severity [if one is more emotionally inclined]. Each individual's longings will thus reflect his natural inclination, one to kindness and one to its opposite [i.e., severity], and so on. Thus, the types of desires [experienced by these people] fall within one of these categories.

This is not so with regard to people whose desires dominate their personalities: their desires fit into no particular pattern [or specific category]. At times they may desire two entirely different (and sometimes opposite) things at the very same instant. It goes without saying that their desires change from one object to another, without limit. This is in line with the saying:²³ *ain lach davad sheomeid bifnei haratzon* — “There is nothing that stands in the way of desire,” in the sense that nothing can keep them from fulfilling their desires.

It is true that such intense desire also has great potential merit, for we observe that it can affect all the faculties of the soul, even the intellect. Intellectual attainment is indeed a fundamental [and laudable] trait, especially since mastering the entire length and breadth of a subject demands diligent preparation. Nonetheless we find that the desire to attain knowledge outweighs all else. A person with an intense desire to excel intellectually will inevitably achieve much more meaningful results than another person who is blessed with a keener mind but lacks the burning desire to excel. Hence the advice of our Sages, of blessed memory,²⁴ *leolam yilmod adam bamakom shelibo chafetz* — “A person should always study in a place that his heart desires,” for his desire enhances his comprehension.

[If so, why do we decry those people whose entire lives revolve around their intense desires?]

However, this only applies to the attainment of one's desire in an orderly fashion, i.e., where desire plays its role in the harmonious melding and blending of all the soul's faculties as they assist one another [in their required tasks. In this context] desire is as crucial as intellect; if a person (Heaven forbid) lacks even one of his soul-faculties he may be considered maimed.

This, however, is not the case with those people whose lives revolve around their desires, and who utilize their other soul-powers only as a means for actualizing their caprices and the like. In such a situation [the faculty of desire] is a detrimental trait.

[Reason and Desire]

[Furthermore, acting in such a manner] defies rationality. Intellect is characterized by quietude and restfulness, as one draws oneself higher and closer to that which is above him, cleaving to a concept in studious contemplation in order to grasp it in all its depth. Chiefly, this entails progressively withdrawing oneself from one's own self, and drawing ever closer to the innermost theme of the concept in question. This resembles the state known as "intellectual astonishment and arrestation" (*hishtomemus haseichel*), wherein the thinker is unaware of the passage of time or of what is happening around him, being completely immersed in his concept.

Desire is the opposite of this state: whenever one desires something he is inevitably conscious only of himself. By its very nature, therefore, desire constrains intellect. When desire is manifest it is impossible to reveal one's intellective faculties.

This also explains why when one seeks to satisfy a desire he is liable to commit many acts of folly until he succeeds in satisfying his passion. Everyone knows full well that after having satisfied his desire, he will be astounded by his former actions and will wonder how he could have possibly lost his mind for the sake of such a goal.

For example, while a person is actively pursuing honor, or the like, he is so completely obsessed by this passion that he feels nothing else at all and is drawn to it alone. Moreover, he enslaves all his soul-powers and intellect in his effort to fulfill his wish, doing a multitude of things without rhyme or reason.

Afterwards he will assail himself and wonder at how he was not able to restrain himself and refrain, particularly when he reminds himself of all the details that he experienced along the road to his goal — the falsehood, the chicanery, the deceit, the plotting and projecting as to how he should speak with this person and how he should speak with that, all in order to advance

his wiles. [He will be even more astonished upon realizing] that acting in such a manner was contrary to his own basic nature.

All the above results from the fact that when one's desire is revealed it is impossible for his intellect to be revealed.

(Elsewhere in the literature of *Chassidus* it is explained that the plethora of passions causes a man to lose his mind, so that as a matter of course he will commit many foolish acts. We may say that what is written there refers to a different class of people, those who are hedonistic by nature. As our Sages, of blessed memory, say,²⁵ *Shevna baal hanaah* — “Shevna was a hedonist,” one of those who seek out the pleasurable potential in everything. Such people are of an even lower caliber than those whose lives are centered around their desires; it is easier for the latter to repent than for outright hedonists.

Possibly the difference between the two corresponds to the difference between those who are “lost” (*ovdim*) and those who are “banished” (*nidachim*).²⁶ Those who are “lost” have acted unwittingly; when they will be “roused by a spirit from above,” and the like, they will surely return. This is not so with regard to the “banished” (Heaven forbid) who have polluted their minds and so forth, and²⁷ “their hearts have been muted” as well. Possibly this is similar to intentional sinning, which is of a yet lower level. At any rate, this matter requires further examination.)

[Intellect and Emotions]

As we have seen, when desire is revealed it is impossible for intellect to be revealed. Hence desire must perforce be limited and circumscribed in its degree of revelation, if room is to be left for intellect to be revealed and drawn forth.

In like manner we can understand how it is Above: Were the *Sefirah* of *Keser* [the *Sefirah* of will and desire] to be revealed to an infinite degree, without limit and measure, it would be impossible for the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah* to emanate. So, in turn, must there be a limit and measure in the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah* to allow the *Sefirah* of *Binah* to emanate. For we observe that when there is a constant outpouring of novel concepts originating in the soul-faculty of *Chochmah*, it is impossible to arrive at [the] comprehension [and elucidating soul-faculty of *Binah*]. A limit and

measure must therefore be set upon the seminal [concepts of] *Chochmah*, so as to make possible the emanation of the *Sefirah* of *Binah*, thereby bringing an undeveloped seminal concept into the realm of comprehension.

The same is true [with regard to the revelation of intellect and emotions]: while intellect dominates it is impossible for emotions to be freely revealed. We observe this to be so with regard to an intellectual who has thoroughly thought through a concept and is then filled with delight. Even if by nature he is generally somewhat aloof (as is the natural inclination of scholars), at this time he is accessible to all, being friendly even to simple people and to those who are not at all intellectually acute.

Quite the opposite will result when he endeavors to comprehend a subject whose profundity persists in eluding him. In such a case, even if he has the most genial personality, he will nevertheless be ill-tempered and dispirited, dismissing everyone and feeling close to no one.

Both these attitudes result from his high level of intellectual activity, whether in a state of accessibility or in a state of withdrawal. Inevitably, at such a time his emotions will be inactive and uninfluential.

Since neither accessibility nor withdrawal are essential characteristics of the emotions themselves, the emotions can express themselves only when the revelation of intellect is limited. The same is true [with regard to emotions and speech]: when the emotions are in a state of revelation, i.e., when they are given free rein, one cannot speak.

To understand the parallel case with regard to the *Sefiros* above: In order for the Ten *Sefiros* to be limited, the lights and their corresponding vessels must be measured. This measurement regulates the degree each *Sefirah* will be allowed to be drawn downward and expanded. It is through this delineation that each *Sefirah* makes room for the following *Sefirah*, and so on.

This, then, is the meaning of the “measuring-line”: it delimits and measures the degree of light to be apportioned to each vessel, and measures the manner in which each *Sefirah* is to be drawn forth and the point until which it is to expand, thereby making possible the appearance of the next *Sefirah*, and so on.

3.

This self-limiting power of *tzimtzum* [which is the contraction, condensation and concealment of the emanating Divine light] derives from *Atzmus HaMaatzil*, the Essence of the Emanator. For just as the revelation [of the Divine light] derives specifically from His Essence, so, too, does *tzimtzum* result from His Essence.

This is analogous to the revelation of intellectual power in man. Its source is *koach hamaskil*, the potential for intellectual enlightenment which enables the thinker to plumb the very depth of a concept. At the same time, this selfsame [*koach hamaskil*] is the source of the process of contraction that makes the concept finite.

With regard to every concept and logical argument there must necessarily be a limit to the degree of intellectual power that will be drawn down and revealed within it. Were the [revealed] intellect to be without limit, it would thereby be removed beyond the pale of intellect, which is by definition circumscribed. Intellectual power can grasp only that which has boundaries that are specified as being such and not otherwise.

Though intellectual activity in itself is thus inherently delimited, the [resultant intellectual and emotional] excitation [may well be] unlimited. As described above, the necessary *limitation* of intellectual power (that is to be applied to a given concept) derives from the same source as the source of the *revelation* of intellectual power; indeed, from an even loftier source.

We therefore observe that it is more difficult to establish limits upon one's intellectual activity — thus far and no further — than to initiate it. This *limitation* of the intellect is more difficult to impose because it derives from soul-powers that are even loftier than the glimmering of soul-powers that *reveal* the intellect.

We can similarly understand the corresponding process Above. The power of *tzimtzum* that conceals, limits and measures the degree of Divine illumination [to be drawn down into the vessels] derives from the same

source as the source of the *revelation* of the Divine illumination; indeed, from an even higher source — from the level of G-d's Essence.

This is also the meaning of the verse,²⁸ *Bereishis bara Elokim* — “In the beginning of creation there was [a manifestation of the Divine Name] *Elokim*.” [Or, more literally, “In the beginning He created *Elokim*.”] It was the Name *Elokim*, which signifies *tzimtzum* and limitation, that first arose in G-d's thought [lit., “in the thought of *Atzmus*”], thus making possible the emanation of the Ten *Sefiros*. Were it not for the process of *tzimtzum*, the Ten *Sefiros* would not have been able to come about in the manner in which they did.

(As far as the infinite potential of G-d's Essence is concerned, this could have come about in any way whatever, [such as in an infinite progression of *Sefiros*]. However, G-d's desire that the emanation take place specifically in this manner [and produce Ten *Sefiros*] necessitated the medium of *tzimtzum*.)

Essentially, then, G-d desired that His light be revealed within the created worlds specifically by the division of the *Sefiros* into ten; moreover, it is only the process of *tzimtzum* that thus limits and divides the *Sefiros* and also measures out the degree of illumination that is to flow into each vessel in accordance with its receptive capacity. It thus follows that the Divine intent that there be *tzimtzum* preceded revelation.

This, then, is the meaning of the verse,²⁸ *Bereishis bara Elokim* — “In the beginning of creation there was [a manifestation of the Divine Name] *Elokim*.” The very first thought of the Emanator [with regard to the emanation of the Ten *Sefiros*] was the manifestation [lit., “the creation”] of [the Divine Name] *Elokim*, which signifies *tzimtzum*.

Within *tzimtzum* itself there are three main levels — or kinds — of “measurement”: the “measurement” that takes place in the Divine Will (*ratzon*); the “measurement” that takes place in the Divine Intellect (*seichel*); the actual “measurement” (*befoal*).

[Three Stages in Thought]

These are analogous to [the three stages of “measurement” that transpire within] a person when the thought of building a house first occurs to him.

First there is the “measurement” that takes place in his will or desire (*ratzon*) — the number, arrangement, size and height of the rooms. It is true that one’s will as a whole is “encompassing” [lit., *makkif*; i.e., non-specific]. At this stage the particulars are to be found in a concealed state; what is experienced is the overall desire for a home rather than its details. Nevertheless, this stage still constitutes a form of “measurement,” inasmuch as it affects the outcome — the home will ultimately be built according to the particulars that are concealed within the individual’s desire.

At the second stage, when this [desire for a home] is translated into intellectual terms, the “measurement” becomes more precise — the house is to be built in a specific manner, with a specified number of rooms arranged in a particular way.

When [the construction of the home] comes closer to actualization, the actual “measurement” takes place. “Actualization” here does not mean the physical construction of the home, but rather the final preparations for it, such as the builder’s blueprint. In the words of *Midrash Rabbah*,^{[29](#)} “...nor does the workman build of his own accord. Rather, he has notebooks and diagrams, so that he will know how to construct his rooms.” Though the blueprint simply follows the architectural principles that are common to all buildings, it nevertheless incorporates the individual’s thoughts and wishes on the construction of his own home.

The above-mentioned [three stages] may also be distinguished within the spiritual service of every Jew — in his [quest to] construct a home for G-d, a dwelling-place for His Presence, within his heart.

First there is the non-specific “measurement” that takes place within his will.

In essence, every Jew desires to become a receptor for G-dliness, to be sensitive to G-dly illumination and to be drawn towards it, and to conduct his life and all his affairs accordingly.

(In this spirit, *Rambam*^{[30](#)} explains the *Gemara*^{[31](#)} which speaks of situations in which “a man is to be coerced until he says, ‘I desire to do so.’” Now, this includes even such weighty situations as [the case of a recalcitrant husband who refuses to issue his wife] a divorce. We are not concerned lest the court’s coercion falsifies his true intention, thereby invalidating the bill of divorce [which is valid only if he gives it out of his

own free will]. Why? — Because according to the Torah he is [in certain circumstances] obligated to [issue the divorce], and every Jew desires within the inner and concealed recesses of his soul to fulfill all that the Divine Intellect has decreed. It is only that certain [corporeal and mundane] factors prevent these promptings of his soul from surfacing. For this reason he is to be coerced.

Accordingly, “He is to be coerced...” may be understood to mean [that the person is forced] to remove those obstacles and hindrances, so that as a matter of course he will say of his own volition, “I desire to do this” — for this reflects his true desire, since every Jew desires to conduct himself in accordance with the decrees that emanate from G-d’s Wisdom.)

Though this [innate desire] may be very much concealed, here, too, the aspect of “measurement” applies. For in general terms every Jew has his own “measurement,” his spiritual self-assessment, for the [spiritual] aspirations of a businessman differ from those of the full-time Torah student of Torah, and so on.

The second stage is the kind of “measurement” that takes place in one’s mind, i.e., the “measurement” of [his obligations according to] G-d’s decrees in the Torah. [This stage is necessary,] for the obligations of businesspeople and merchants differ from those of full-time Torah students. More specifically, some people have a greater aptitude for intellectual pursuits, while for others, kind and charitable deeds are more appropriate. This stage of “measurement” is more detailed than the previous one.

The third stage, “measurement” as it applies to practical action, resembles the drawing of a builder’s blueprint: though based on universal architectural principles, it incorporates the particular “measurements” made by the desire and mind of a particular individual. This is the kind of “measurement” that takes place during prayer, for at this time a clearer picture emerges of the particular kind of Divine service that is appropriate to one’s stature and nature.

[The Function of Prayer]

It is indeed true that in general terms, the function of prayer is to bind oneself to G-d and to cleave to Him, to nullify oneself and set oneself aside, and to take stock of all one’s affairs in the realms of thought, speech and

action. And just as a prospective builder must first ascertain whether the site is suitable or whether it needs cleaning and preparation, so, too, as everyone knows, a worshiper must first prepare himself, cleanse his thoughts and refine his attributes, and so on.

However, in addition to this seemingly non-specific preparation for prayer, prayer also entails a specific “measurement,” a gauging of oneself from the standpoint of every individual’s self-knowledge — for example, which of his character traits and thoughts ought to be utterly uprooted. He knows that he can find traits that do not at all befit his standing, with regard to envy, falsehood, and the like, or inappropriate thoughts and fantasies, or character traits that call for rectification and refinement. It is during the service of prayer that one thus measures his manner of conduct and study during the ensuing day.

These, then, are the three stages of *tzimtzum* [or “measurement”] by which one calls forth the light of his soul, and causes the light of G-dliness to be revealed within it, and to illuminate it together with the allotted portion of the world that he is destined to elevate with every facet of his life.

Similarly, in the worlds above, we find three [stages and] levels of *tzimtzum* and “measurement”: the level of *Gevuros* of *Atik Yomin* that are garbed in *Mocha Stimaah*; the level of the Five *Gevuros* of *Imma* [i.e., *Binah*]; and the Five *Gevuros* of the level of *Malchus*.

The first stage is the “measurement” that takes place in the Divine Will — the level of *Gevuros* of *Atik Yomin* that are garbed in *Mocha Stimaah*, bringing about the emanation of *Chochmah* and *Binah* [of *Atzilus*]. Though this “measurement” is still non-specific, for it is still in a state of concealment, its delineation is sufficiently finite to enable it to give rise to *Chochmah* and *Binah*.

Thereafter comes the “measurement” of the Five *Gevuros* of *Imma* [i.e., *Binah*]. This resembles the more precise “measurement” that takes place in the mind. From this “measurement” the six emotive attributes of *Atzilus* (collectively known as *Z’eir Anpin*) emanate.

[Three Aspects of Atzilus]

They are the mainstay of the edifice of *Atzilus*, for it has three main characteristics:

(a) *Atzilus* relates to “inwardness” and “inbeing” (*pnimiyus*), and this is primarily manifested within the six emotive attributes of *Atzilus*. For the intellectual levels (the *Mochin*) of *Chochmah* and *Binah* — such as *Makkifin deImma* (the transcendent aspect of *Binah*) — are still “encompassing” (as opposed to immanent), whereas the emotive attributes are at the level of *pnimiyus*. For this reason, specifically these emotive attributes are termed *Adam*³² [Whose mortal counterpart is called *adam*, lit., “man” — a being who is essentially a *pnimi*].

(b) *Atzilus* is characterized by illumination and revelation,³³ for its Ten *Sefiros* emanated³⁴ “in order that He be known therein.” This aspect is mainly found in the six emotive attributes of *Atzilus*, for *Binah* of *Atzilus* is called *mi* [lit., “Who?”]: “it is a subject of query, not of knowledge.”³⁵ The six emotive attributes, in contrast, are called *eileh* [lit., “these”], signifying revelation.³⁶

(c) *Atzilus* was created in order that it serve as an intermediary between the Emanator and created beings.³⁷ This aspect, too, is found in the six emotive attributes of *Atzilus*, for the intellectual levels of *Chochmah* and *Binah* are too lofty to serve as a source for the created worlds.

Thus it is said [of *Chochmah* and *Binah*] that³⁸ “The Torah [i.e., the intellectual levels of *Chochmah* and *Binah* from which the Torah emanates] preceded the world [not chronologically but qualitatively] by two thousand years.” The emotive attributes, on the other hand, do serve as a source for the created worlds, for “The six days [i.e., the six attributes] *made*....[i.e., were instrumental in creating the worlds],” with “every day [i.e., attribute] doing its appointed task.”³⁹

Moreover, as is known, the “order of time” is found specifically in the six emotive attributes; time relates to *Malchus*, whereas the “order of time” which *precedes* time is to be found within these six attributes.⁴⁰

Thus the mainstays of the edifice of *Atzilus* are the six emotive attributes of *Atzilus*, which are constructed from the Five *Gevuros* of *Imma* (*Binah*), for it is they who measure the degree of light and revelation that will be drawn down within the six emotive attributes.

[The third stage of “measurement” consists of] the Five *Gevuros* of *Malchus*, which make possible the creation and construction of the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.

This, then, is the effect of the “measuring-line” — the *tzimtzum* which (a) limits the illumination and gauges the lights and vessels [of *Atzilus*] in order that the lights be in a finite state within each individual vessel, and (b) regulates the manner in which each *Sefirah* is elicited and diffused.

4.

Concerning the “measuring-rod” it is stated in the *Zohar* (II, 233b) that “it is not [of the level of] *butzina dekaridenisa*...; rather, this rod descends from there to a lower level, which was ‘frozen’ from the illumination that remained after the ascent of *butzina dekaridenisa*.” The “measuring-rod” is thus not [of the level of] *butzina dekaridenisa*, i.e., the level of *Gevuros* of *Atik Yomin* that enclothe themselves in *Mocha Stimaah*, which is the level of the “measuring-line.” Rather, “*from there* this rod descends to a lower level, which was ‘frozen’ from the illumination that remained after the ascent of *butzina dekaridenisa*.”

Thus, this [“measuring-rod”] is but a vestige of the light of the *Gevuros* of *Atik Yomin* that remained after the ascent of the illumination of the “measuring-line” which “measures” [the degree] of illumination and light [that is to descend into the vessels, etc.]. Accordingly, the “measuring-rod” measures merely the ascent and self-concealment of the Divine light, whereas the “measuring-line” measures the light and the revelation of the Ten *Sefiros*.

[The “measuring-line” is thus superior,] for the primary Divine intent was that light should be revealed in *Atzilus* and through it be drawn down [in some measure] to illuminate [the three lower Worlds of] *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* as well.

All this is accomplished by means of the *tzimtzum*, which is the “measurement” effected by the “measuring-line”; without this “measurement,” the Ten *Sefiros* would not emanate in the manner desired by G-d, viz., in their present form.

It is true (as explained earlier) that within the *pnimiyus* of the blessed Emanator the intent of *tzimtzum* arose first [which would give precedence to the “measuring-rod” over the “measuring-line” inasmuch as it “measures” concealment rather than revelation] for the ultimate purpose of revelation; moreover, this revelation comes about by means of *Atzilus* and its Ten *Sefiros* which were drawn down and defined by the “measuring line.” Nevertheless, the ultimate [and innermost intent of the Emanator] remains

— revelation.⁴¹ It is only that in order for this to take place in this [desired] manner, there [first] had to be an emanation of the Ten *Sefiros*, preceded by the *tzimtzum* of the “measuring-line.”

[Though the *Sefiros* came into being through an act of *tzimtzum*,] the [*tzimtzum* or] “measurement” effected by the “measuring-line” relates to light and [hence to] revelation. [As such it is superior to] the “measuring-rod” which “measures” the light which ascends [and becomes concealed from creation] and which is a vestige of the light of the “measuring-line.”

[Tohu and Tikkun]

In a more general sense, this is the difference between the “measurement” that takes place in [the Ten *Sefiros* of *Atzilus*, which is the World of] *Tikkun* and the “measurement” that takes place in the [the preceding level, which experienced the “breakage” and descent of its emotive vessels, viz.,] the World of *Tohu*. It is explained in *Midrash Rabbah* and in *Sefer HaBahir*⁴² that with regard to [the *Sefiros* of] *Tikkun* it is said, “These please Him,” whereas with regard to [the *Sefiros* of] *Tohu* it is said, “and these do not please Him.” Respectively, then, these are the levels of Divine “desire” and “lack of desire.”

Now, even those levels which are illuminated by Divine desire must also undergo “measurement” (for without it nothing but G-d’s desire would be revealed [and the other *Sefiros* would not be able to come into being], and the deficiency inherent in this has been explained). However, this “measurement” relates to a scale of illumination and revelation: it matches the degree of radiance to the receptive capacity of the vessels.

By way of analogy, an innately kind individual will shower generosity [upon his fellow], and at the same time increase his benevolence and prove his goodwill by doing so in a manner that can be properly received.

“Lack of desire” [on the other hand] is expressed in “measurement” motivated by concealment and *tzimtzum*.

The realm of *Tikkun*, where “These please Him,” thus manifests Divine desire. All “measurements” there seek to elicit and expand the revelation of Divine radiance within the lights and the vessels. Indeed, even their limitation and circumscription is intended to elicit [within themselves] even the “concealed light,” etc.

Tohu, in contrast, where “these do not please Me,” manifests a “lack of Divine desire.” All the “measurements” there reflect limitation and *tzimtzum*, which relates to the ascent [and concealment] of the Divine light.

The *Sefiros* of *Tohu* were thus in the state of [ascent and “advance” out of the vessels which is called] *ratzo*, whereas the *Sefiros* of *Tikkun* are in the state of [“return” which is called] *shov*, signifying a drawing down and diffusion [of the light within the *Sefiros*]. For⁴³ “not for the sake of [the chaotic state of] *Tohu* did He create [the world]; rather, for the sake of habitation [i.e., a settled state, the *shov* of *Tikkun*] did He create it.” This enables the light and revelation to be drawn down even to the very lowest levels.

Now, the forces of the *sitra achra* — which are nurtured by the leavings of the most extrinsic aspects [of holiness that came into being] from the “breakage of the vessels” of *Tohu* by means of the multitudinous stages in the chainlike scheme of descent called *Hishtalshelus* — have no true or lasting existence at all. They are intrinsically non-entities, inasmuch as they derive from a “lack of Divine desire,” and the “measurement” that applies to them is one of withdrawal. They therefore have an appointed end-point at which they will utterly cease to exist.

Though in the “side of holiness” there also exist “measurements,” such as those of the “measuring-line” and the *tzimtzum*, these manifest G-d’s desire — to reveal and draw forth [His light to them]. Any thrust which manifests G-d’s desire is infinite; as is stated in *Tikkunei Zohar*,⁴⁴ “G-d’s infinite light extends upward without any bound and downward without any end.” Moreover, whatever is elicited by dint of G-d’s desire enjoys essential and absolute existence as well; as was explained [earlier], when the vessels cleave and fuse with the Divine light which they house, they too enjoy essential and absolute existence.

The same is true of all *mitzvos* that are clothed in physical things, such as parchment or the wool of *tzitzis*. Likewise, anything which G-d ordained to serve as a proper receptor for the irradiation of His light enjoys an essential and absolute existence.

[Holiness Cannot Be Displaced]

(One might add that this is the meaning of teachings such as,⁴⁵ “Holiness cannot be displaced,” and⁴⁶ “Ritual objects retain their sanctity.” Thus, the place in which a *tzaddik* studied Torah and engaged in the service of G-d retains its sanctity even after he has ascended out of corporeal life and begun true life, for the luminescence of his Divine service remains there. We may therefore say that the place in which he studied and engaged in Torah, and all the vessels he utilized in the course of his spiritual service, retain their sanctity as part of his personal share in the spiritual rectification and elevation of the world. In this connection: Once, in about the year 5645 or 5646 [1885-6], I saw my revered father [the Rebbe Rashab] enter the study of his father — my grandfather [the Rebbe Maharash]; at that time the room was still arranged as it had been during his lifetime. He was wearing a *gartl* and stood against the table, opposite his father’s chair. His lips were moving as if in speech and he shed many tears.)

In contrast to the “side of holiness,” the *kelipos* derive their existence from a “lack of Divine desire” and were therefore sundered from G-d’s unity. They have no existence other than the animation which they receive from the encompassing level of Divine light. When this source is removed they will be totally cut off [from life] and will be utterly obliterated. This is the meaning of the above-quoted verse, “[G-d] has set a limit to darkness....” The darkness of *kelipah* has a limited time, after which the *kelipos* will be utterly destroyed and annihilated,” since they originate from a “lack of Divine desire.”

Though the above is true of *sitra achra* in general, it is especially true of the *kelipah* of Amalek, whose whole being is brazenness and *chutzpah*, with no inner content at all. Every other *kelipah* has at least some content, albeit evil, such as the “*Chesed* (or some other evil attribute) of *kelipah*.”

This is not the case with the *kelipah* of Amalek, the *kelipah* of brazen *chutzpah*; an insolent individual, as he himself is aware, is essentially a non-entity. For by their very nature, as we observe, the baser and more degraded such people are, the less do they retain their human aspect; the more do they relate with insolence, in an animal-like fashion, to people more elevated than themselves.

(In fact, every individual can find a trace of this within himself as it relates to his spiritual service: During the time he indulges his corporeal cravings, for food and drink and the like, there arises within his mind a

marked coolness toward higher things, etc., i.e., toward things which relate to the inner essence (the *pnimiyus*) of his *avodah*, such as the enhanced observance of *mitzvos*, or to observances that reflect the insights of the *Kabbalah*.)

So, too, the *kelipah* of Amalek, whose whole being is insolence, is essentially a non-entity. Amalek thus resembles the waves of the sea that are lifted by the wind. While water by nature descends, it is [capable of being] lifted by the wind and [momentarily] standing upright like a wall; however, as soon as the wind abates, the water collapses. So, too, *kelipos* in general and Amalek in particular derive their sustenance only from the encompassing level of Divine life-force, and will thus “appear and disappear with the wind.” This, then, is what is meant by the phrase, “[G-d] has set a limit to darkness”: the darkness of the *kelipos* has an appointed end, after which they will be cut off and utterly destroyed, leaving no trace.

In this regard there is a difference between [*Mashiach’s* coming] “at the appointed time” and [his coming] “in haste” [before the “appointed time”].⁴⁷ If the *kelipos* are nullified “at the appointed time,” they will be utterly annihilated. If, however, the Jewish people are found worthy [and *Mashiach* comes] “in haste” at an earlier [than the appointed] time, then [the *kelipos*] will be nullified by being rectified.

In either case there will be an increase in the light of holiness, except that if the *kelipos* are nullified by being rectified, this holy light will radiate with far greater intensity.

This is the meaning of Achashverosh’s command to Haman:⁴⁸ “Make haste and take the garment....” Why the haste? Achashverosh was simply giving him some sound advice. Ultimately Haman [as the epitome of evil] was sure to be nullified. If this were to take place “at the appointed time,” then he would be utterly obliterated. Achashverosh therefore advised him to be rectified by means of *beirur*, by elevating the sparks of holiness embedded in the world — by serving as a garment to adorn Mordechai the *tzaddik*. If this took place “in haste,” he would not be totally nullified, but rather be rectified. Besides, there would be a corresponding increase of illumination in the realm of holiness.

[Three Shades of Darkness]

In terms of man's spiritual service, "[G-d] has set a limit to darkness" may be understood as follows.

The Hebrew word for darkness (*choshech*) is spelled *ches*, *shin*, *chaf*. This is also an acronym for the words meaning donkey, ox, and dog (*chamor*, *shor*, *kelev*).⁴⁹

"Donkey" recalls the observation of the Sages that⁵⁰ "A donkey is cold even during the hottest days of Tammuz." [Let us understand this in terms of man's spiritual service.] It is written,⁵¹ "For [the Divine Names] *Havayah* [and] *Elokim* are [respectively] a sun and a shield"; i.e., the Name *Elokim* conceals and occludes the radiance of the Name *Havayah*. However, there are times at which the illumination of the Name *Havayah* radiates overtly — as in the verse,⁵² "I am *Havayah*: I have not changed...." If, even at such a time, one's contemplation [of G-dliness] is not as fruitful as it should be, [then he is likened to the donkey who remains cold even when standing out in the sunshine]. Concerning this [abysmal spiritual state] the prophet laments [at the conclusion of the above-mentioned verse], "...yet you, sons of Yaakov, are not consumed" with a passion to cleave to G-d.

"Ox" alludes to people who kick and gore, as is the nature of those who are defiant and insolent: even if they are grazed ever so slightly by those who seek to elevate them, they immediately kick.

The epithet "dog" suggests shameless insolence, as in the verse,⁵³ "And the dogs are fierce-tempered...."

The darkness of *kelipah*, [then, includes the attributes which are alluded to by the Hebrew initials for donkey, ox and dog, which together spell *choshech* — darkness]. However, "[G-d] has set a limit to darkness," for these very attributes may be utilized in the pursuit of holiness.

For a start: The attribute represented by the epithet "donkey" may be harnessed to serve holy ends. Thus it is written,⁵⁴ "and he bent his back to the load," meaning that one applies himself⁵⁵ "like an ox to the yoke and like a donkey to the load," by setting aside fixed times for Torah study, notwithstanding his busy schedule and his many concerns. (The Alter Rebbe stressed that this regularity should be fixed and imprinted upon one's soul,⁵⁶ and not necessarily fixed to certain times alone. For a schedule may from time to time be broken, whereas if it is fixed within his soul, then even if he happens to miss his appointed time of Torah study and is unable to

learn, he will still fulfill his obligation.) Moreover, while studying one should be aware of the fact that he is studying G-d's Torah.

The attribute represented by the epithet “ox” — an inclination to gore — may be sublimated by its use⁵⁷ in the thrust and parry, the queries and the solutions, that are part of the *pilpul* of Torah. [To borrow the language of our Sages,⁵⁸] “...like scholars who [metaphorically speaking] gore each other in [their lively debates] on the *Halachah*.”

(One might add that the attribute represented by the epithet “ox” may also be applied in the service of prayer, at which time the worshiper stomps and gores the evil found within him, such as in the course of [the Psalms of] *Pesukei deZimrah*, when one “clips the oppressors,” and uproots the evil traits which every individual can identify within himself.)

Finally, the dog also calls to mind a positive attribute. The Jews are called⁵⁹ “an impetuous people.” In a positive sense, this means that they hasten to do good things and are quickly aroused by stimuli that address their innermost core. [At Sinai, for example,] they proceeded to say *naaseh* (“we shall do”) before they said *nishma* (“we shall hear”), thus indicating their self-nullification before G-d and His Will, as they set aside their own selves completely.

In all, these [holy attributes] represented by the donkey, the ox and the dog rectify and elevate their counterparts in the realm of *kelipah*.

This, then, is the meaning of the statement that “Amalek is the first among nations...”: Amalek is the first and root of all nations. All nations, being rooted in the *sitra achra*, essentially have no true being, inasmuch as they derive from a “lack of Divine desire.” Among these, Amalek is the first in rank, for the *kelipah* of Amalek is that of insolence and *chutzpah*, which indicates the ultimate degree of non-being, as explained above.

This is why “in the end he shall be destroyed,” for *kelipah* will ultimately be annihilated — if [*Mashiach* arrives] “at the appointed time.” If, however, as a result of Divine service in the realm of *beirurim*, [*Mashiach* arrives] “in haste,” then it is possible for the nations to undergo some form of rectification. It is for this reason that we find that the descendants of Haman publicly studied Torah. This means that there was a refinement and rectification [of *kelipah*], and this in turn called forth an additional measure of G-dly illumination.

Footnotes

- [1.](#) This Foreword makes extensive use of an informative article by R. Shalom Yaakov Chazan entitled *Shloshah Doros shel Milchamah BaAmalek* (“Three Generations of the Battle against Amalek”), which appeared in *Beis Moshiach*, Issue #31, p. 7ff.
- [2.](#) See *Sefer HaSichos — Toras Shalom* (first edition), p. 246.
- [3.](#) Page 104.
- [4.](#) See: *Etz Chayim*, *Shaar* 4, sec. 3, and *Shaar* 34, sec. 3; *Tanya — Iggeres HaKodesh*, the Elucidation to Epistle 27 [in *Lessons In Tanya*, Vol. V, p. 173].
- [5.](#) See: *Megillah* 26b; *Rambam*, *Hilchos Sefer Torah* 10:4; *Tur Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim* 154:3; *Yoreh Deah* 282:12. See also: the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch* 42:6; *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. XII, p. 135, and references listed there.
- [6.](#) At the *farbrengen* of *Shabbos Parshas Vayikra*, Nissan 5, 5747 [1987]; see *Sefer HaHisvaaduyos* 5747 [1987], Vol. II, p. 752.
- [7.](#) See *Heichal Menachem*, Vol. II, p. 222.
- [8.](#) See the *maamar* beginning with the words, *Zachor Eis Asher Asah Lecha Amalek*, 5730 [1970].
- [9.](#) *Shmos* 17:16.
- [10.](#) *Iyov* 28:3.
- [11.](#) *Rambam*, *Hilchos Melachim* 12:5.
- [12.](#) *Bamidbar* 24:20.
- [13.](#) *Yeshayahu* 44:6. See also: *Siddur im Dach*, p. 281a; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5665 [1905], p. 211; and elsewhere.
- [14.](#) *Gittin* 57b. *Likkutei Torah* of the *AriZal* (so too *Sefer HaLikkutim*) on *Sefer Shoftim* adds that R. Shmuel bar Shilas likewise descended from him.
- [15.](#) *Mishlei* 1:20; see also *Or HaTorah — Nach* (Vol. I) on this verse, p. 547.
- [16.](#) See Tractate *Sofrim* 13:6 with the commentary of *Nachalas Yaakov*, and the references cited there.

[17.](#) *Iyov* 28:3.

[18.](#) Cf. *Berachos* 55b.

[19.](#) Beginning of *Sefer Yetzirah*. See also: *Torah Or* on *Parshas Toldos*, p. 20b; *Or HaTorah* on *Parshas Toldos* (Vol. I), p. 151b ff.; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5654 [1894], p. 65ff.; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5686 [1926], p. 183ff. On the subject about to be discussed, see also the *maamar* that begins, *U'BeYom Simchas'chem* 5656 [1895].

[20.](#) *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* 1:4.

[21.](#) From the morning prayers; see *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 48.

[22.](#) See also *Biurei HaZohar* (by the Mitteler Rebbe and also by the *Tzemach Tzedek*) on *Parshas Pekudei*.

[23.](#) Cf. *Zohar* II, 162b.

[24.](#) *Avodah Zarah* 19a.

[25.](#) *Sanhedrin* 26b.

[26.](#) See also *Likkutei Torah* on *Rosh HaShanah*, p. 60a; *Ateres Rosh*, *Shaar Rosh HaShanah*, ch. 23; and elsewhere.

[27.](#) *Shabbos* 147b; see also *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5626, p. 36ff.; and elsewhere.

[28.](#) *Bereishis* 1:1.

[29.](#) On the above verse.

[30.](#) *Hilchos Geirushin* 2:20.

[31.](#) [*Rosh HaShanah* 6a].

[32.](#) See: *Torah Or* on *Parshas Bereishis*, p. 4d; *Likkutei Torah* on *Parshas Vayikra*, p. 3b; see also *Sefer HaArachim — Chabad*, Vol. I, s.v. *Adam HaElyon*, and sources there.

[33.](#) See *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5678 [1918], p. 296ff.; and elsewhere.

[34.](#) *Zohar* II, 42b.

[35.](#) *Zohar* II, 117a. See also: *Zohar* I, 1b; *Zohar* II, 126b; and elsewhere.

[36.](#) See *Likkutei Torah* on *Parshas Pekudei*, p. 4c; and elsewhere.

[37.](#) See: *Torah Or* on *Megillas Esther*, p. 93a; *Likkutei Torah* on *Parshas Vaes'chanan*, p.12a; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5678 [1918], p. 112ff.; and elsewhere.

[38.](#) See: *Midrash Tehillim* 90:4; *Bereishis Rabbah* 8:2; *Midrash Tanchuma* on *Parshas Vayeishev*, sec. 4, and sources there; *Zohar* II, 49a.

[39.](#) *Shmos* 20:11; *Zohar* III, 94b.

[40.](#) See: *Maamarei Admur HaZaken — 5565* [1805], p. 320; *Biurei HaZohar* (by the *Tzemach Tzedek*) on *Parshas Terumah*, p. 257; *Or HaTorah* on *Parshas Chayei Sarah* (Vol. II), p. 424b; and elsewhere.

[41.](#) See *BeShaah SheHikdimu* 5672, Vol. II, p. 1002ff.

[42.](#) *Bereishis Rabbah* 3:7; *Hosafos* (Addenda) to *Zohar* I, sec. 29.

[43.](#) *Yeshayahu* 45:18.

[44.](#) See *Tikkun* 19, p. 40b; end of *Tikkun* 57; *Zohar Chadash* on *Parshas Yisro*, p. 34c. See also: the conclusion of *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5627 [1867]; the *maamar* beginning *Basi LeGani* of *Yud Shvat*, 5710 [1950], sec. 12ff. [For an English translation of the last-mentioned source, see *Basi LeGani: Chassidic Discourses* (translated by Sichos In English and published by Kehot, N.Y., 1990), p. 53ff.]

[45.](#) See: *Etz Chayim*, *Shaar* 4, sec. 3, and *Shaar* 34, sec. 3; *Tanya* — *Iggeres HaKodesh*, the Elucidation to Epistle 27 [in *Lessons In Tanya*, Vol. V, p. 173].

[46.](#) See: *Megillah* 26b; *Rambam*, *Hilchos Sefer Torah* 10:4; *Tur Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim* 154:3; *Yoreh Deah* 282:12. See also: the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch* 42:6; *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. XII, p. 135, and references listed there.

[47.](#) See: *Sanhedrin* 98a; *Zohar* I, 117b. On the passage that follows, see *Shaarei Orah*, at the end of the *maamar* beginning *Yaviu Levush*.

[48.](#) *Esther* 6:10.

[49.](#) *Meorei Or* 8:1; see also *Zohar* II, 65a.

[50.](#) *Shabbos* 53a.

[51.](#) *Tehillim* 84:12; see also *Shaar HaYichud VehoEmunah*, beg. of ch.4; and elsewhere.

[52.](#) *Malachi* 3:6; see also *Likkutei Torah* on *Rosh HaShanah*, p. 61d.

[53.](#) *Yeshayahu* 56:14.

[54.](#) *Bereishis* 49:13.

[55.](#) *Avodah Zarah* 5b.

[56.](#) See also *Likkutei Dibburim*, Vol. I, p. 7a [and in English translation: Vol. I, p. 13].

[57.](#) See *Sifri* on *Parshas Chukas* 19:9; *Sanhedrin* 24a.

[58.](#) See *Bava Metzia* 59b.

[59.](#) See *Shabbos* 88a.